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Tuesday
DECEMBER 23, 2014

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A Chicago Tribune publication

And a
Tamagotchi in
a pear tree **4**

Wolves test out
new skating
ribbon **6**

Ka-Pau! Gasol's
golden touch
10



CTA'S PLAN B

Rats on birth control? Transit agency
hopes new strategy will help keep
rodent population in check **page 3**

BY SAMANTHA NELSON FOR REDEYE | REDEYE@TRIBUNE.COM ➤ GET MORE EAT. DRINK. DO. IDEAS AT REDEYECHICAGO.COM

**MODERN HANUKKAH MENU****Bistronomic**

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Executive chef Martial Noguier offers contemporary takes on traditional Jewish dishes with a three-course menu including warm cured salmon, glazed beef short ribs and apple tarte tatin. 5-9:30 p.m. \$50. RSVP required.

CHRISTMAS GOOSE**Gemini Bistro**

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DRINK**PBR-OLIDAY****East Room**

2828 W. Medill Ave. 773-276-9603

The Logan Square bar's holiday party includes PBR (9-10 p.m.) and DJ sets from Vamos and garage rockers White Mystery. 9 p.m. No cover. RSVP: do312.com

REDEYE TIP OF THE DAY

Bountiful Eatery is auctioning off use of the restaurant for a private New Year's Eve party for 20: ebay.com

**'THE NUTCRACKER'****Auditorium****Theatre of****Roosevelt****University**50 E. Congress Parkway
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See The Joffrey Ballet's 27th annual production, which sets the holiday classic in a 19th century American home and features performances by the Chicago Philharmonic, local children's choruses and 118 young dancers. 2 and 7 p.m. \$33-\$134. Tickets: joffrey.org/nutcracker

**MINISTRY OF SUPPLY POP-UP SHOP****The Wit Hotel**

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The Boston-based menswear line has set up shop in the Loop through the end of 2014, selling tailored clothes for everything from workouts to business meetings. Noon-7 p.m.



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THE RODENT METHOD

CTA AIMS TO CURB RAT POPULATION WITH PILOT BIRTH CONTROL PROGRAM



GOING PUBLIC

Tracy Swartz

 • tswartz@tribune.com
 • [@tracyswartz](https://twitter.com/tracyswartz)

The CTA said it will launch a new weapon in the war on rats next year.

In addition to poisonous traps the CTA uses to kill rats, the agency plans to test new technology that would make rats infertile. A pilot program is expected to start in the spring, though the CTA

is still working out details including negotiating the price with the bait maker and deciding where the traps will be placed, CTA spokeswoman Tammy Chase said.

Chase said rats "are not a notable or systemic issue" on the CTA but the agency is trying to be proactive in combating them. The CTA "very infrequently" receives rat complaints from riders, though the agency has no idea how many rodents have been spotted on CTA property because they don't count them, Chase said.

A few rats were discovered during the renovation of the Damen Blue Line stop in Wicker Park that ended Monday, Chase said. The rodents had found homes in the flooring of the station, which dates back to 1895. The CTA replaced the Damen wood floor with

granite as part of its \$13.6 million facelift.

"[The pilot] is definitely not a reactive thing," Chase said. "It is about the health and safety of our employees and our customers."

Brown Norway rats, the most common rat species in Chicago, can carry infected fleas and ticks that may be passed on to humans, according to the city. Rats also can bite humans or pets. City spokesmen did not return a request for comment on the size of Chicago's rat population, though pest control company Orkin named Chicago America's "Rattiest City" in October based on the number of rodent treatments the company performed last year.

The new bait the CTA plans to test in the spring is called ContraPest, made by Arizona company SenesTech, which tested the traps in the New York subway last year. The bait, which comes in semi-solid or liquid form, is placed in a small box for rats to eat so they have a more difficult time reproducing. Female rats lose eggs while male rats have testicle problems, according to the SenesTech website.

After the rats eat the bait multiple times, they typically make fewer babies within four weeks, according to SenesTech. Full sterility usually occurs within eight to 12 weeks. SenesTech says the bait doesn't kill the rats or poison them, and it doesn't harm humans or the environment. SenesTech did not return multiple requests for comment.

SenesTech traps were placed in three New York subway stations and Grand Central Terminal, a major New York rail hub, last year for a three-month, \$1.1 million federally-funded study. The study found about half the rats took the bait and there was a 43 percent decline in the rat population in those areas.

New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority spokesman Adam Lisberg said SenesTech was supposed to conduct another study this year in more

subway stations but did not end up doing a follow-up because SenesTech was focusing its efforts on a Massachusetts trial.

"We would welcome them to come back and do a phase two here," Lisberg said.

In Chicago, the CTA spends about \$500,000 annually in pest control but Chase

HOLIDAY BUS AND TRAIN TRACKER

Tuesday is the last day for the CTA's annual Holiday Train and Holiday Bus. The Holiday Train will be on the Yellow Line while the Holiday Bus will be on the No. 49-Western route.

didn't know how much of that money is used for the poisonous rat traps. The agency focuses its rat control efforts on common rodent hiding places including subway sewers, older stations that have nooks and crannies, bus garages where bus drivers dump out the garbage riders have left behind on buses and CTA property near dumpsters, Chase said.

"Old facilities and the presence of garbage are a big challenge," Chase said.

Before the CTA began demolition work in the fall on the century-old Wilson Red Line stop in Uptown, some nearby residents expressed concern about rodents fleeing the station as their rat homes were destroyed. The CTA assured residents the agency would prioritize rat abatement.

An aide to Uptown Ald. James Cappleman said no complaints about rats have been reported to the 46th Ward office. Demolition work on the Wilson stop is expected to continue in the spring as part of a \$203 million renovation project.

GETTY IMAGES PHOTO



43 PERCENT

A NY. study found about half the rats took the bait and there was a 43 percent decline in the rat population in those areas.

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Holiday gifts for your rad '90s kid



The Second City
NETWORK

Kristina Felske
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A '90s kid is a specific subset of the oft-referenced Millennial generation who grew up in the 1990s and sincerely loves talking about Disney princesses for some damn reason.

'90s kids grew up playing with Muppets that laughed when tickled, gelatinous faux-bugs made

from plastic molds and other dumb [bleep] because their parents had money at their disposal, BECAUSE THE U.S. WAS ON TOP, BABY!!!!!!

Due to the fact that '90s kids grew up during a time of economic prosperity, it may be a little tough to find them an appropriate holiday gift. Here are seven great gift ideas for your favorite little sentimental baby adult:

1. Tamagotchi

If there's one toy that '90s kids "bug out" for, it's the Tamagotchi. For those of you who spent the 1990s teaching your Furby to speak English, a Tamagotchi is a keychain-sized, egg-shaped digital pet that eats, poops and ignores your needs ... just like a real pet! Teach your Millennial about responsibility without having to talk to them!

2. A college degree

If you're a little strapped for cash this holiday season, consider getting your '90s kid a college degree. Since a college degree is the career equivalent to a high school degree, you might as well just print out a random diploma and wrap it up. Voila! You just saved \$300,000 and the experience of having a post-grad live-in child.

3. 'Friends: The Complete Series' on DVD

'90s kids "go postal" for the all-time greatest sitcom of all-time — "Friends"! Help your '90s kid catch up with Rachel, Ross, Monica, Joey, Chandler, Phoebe, Gunther, Richard, Janice, Eddie, Mr. Heckles, Frank Jr., Paul Rudd, Ursula, the Ugly Naked Guy and Marcel before the all-time greatest sitcom of all time comes to Netflix in January!

Editor's Note: YOU HAVE TWO WEEKS! HURRY!

4. A house

Since about a third of Millennials still live with their parents, according to the Pew Research Center, it would be really nice to just buy your '90s kid a house. It's cute when a child eats all the snacks in the cupboard the day you get groceries, but it's definitely not cute when a 25-year-old does it.

5. Clear landline phone

Advertising and marketing firms still are struggling to figure out how best to communicate with '90s kids, as Millennials are notoriously difficult to reach through traditional advertising strategies. Celebrate your child's shrewd skepticism and appreciation for market transparency by purchasing a clear landline phone! Your '90s kid will appreciate the call back to their elementary school years, and their friends will find their willingness to own a landline hilarious and quirky.

Plus, it's clear, so they can see how it works. That's fun, right? Don't they want to be an engineer instead of a sculptor?

6. A new birth year

Twenty-somethings who have recently graduated from college face a steep unemployment rate, while many of those employed work in industries that do not require a college degree. On top of those lovely realities, a whopping 66 percent of hiring managers do not believe college graduates are ready for employment, according to recruiting company Adecco.

This holiday season, give your '90s kid a leg up in the job market by offering to doctor his or her birth certificate. If they appear older, they may just seem talented enough to answer phones and grab a cup of coffee for a mid-level sales manager every once in a while!

7. Cutting them off

If you're one of those parents who insist your child is "special," "intelligent" and "kind" even when he defends Darren Wilson on the grounds of "reverse racism," then y'all gotta back the [bleep] up. Helicopter parenting is linked to higher levels of depression, increased dependence and decreased autonomy.

Thus, the greatest gift you can give your '90s kid this Christmas is NOTHING. Except a house.

KRISTINA FELSKA IS A WRITER, ACTOR AND IMPROVISER. HER ORIGINAL MUSICAL, "PENNY, THE [BLEEP]ABLE DOLPHIN: A LOVE STORY" IS PLAYING WEDNESDAYS AT THE ANNOYANCE. GET MORE AT SECONDCITYNETWORK.COM.

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SKATING WITH THE WOLVES

PRO PLAYERS TEST NEW ICE RIBBON



JEREMY WELSH

MATT CLIMIE

LENNY GILMORE/REDEYE

By Leonor Vivanco | REDEYE

Chicagoans and tourists can “ooh” and “aah” all they want about the new quarter-mile long ice skating ribbon at Maggie Daley Park, but the true test of coolness comes from the pros who’ve practically worn ice skates since they could walk.

RedEye invited two Chicago Wolves players—forward Jeremy Welsh and goalie Matt Climie—to bring their skates downtown just days after the park opened to the public and zip around the ice ribbon, with its slight slopes and inclines, that snakes around the park’s climbing walls.

The pair laced up their skates and stepped out on the ice on a recent foggy Monday afternoon. They did six laps around the ice ribbon, which opened to much fanfare when Mayor Emanuel and former Mayor Richard M. Daley cut the ribbon together Dec. 13 at the park named after Daley’s late wife.

“Going around when I showed up to look at it, it was pretty cool,” said Welsh, 26. “Skating around, it was a lot more fun than I thought it would be.”

At 27,500 square feet, the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Skating Ribbon ice surface is much bigger than the Wolves’ home, the 200-by-85-foot oval rink inside Rosemont’s Allstate Arena. A bigger ice surface means more room for skaters. The 20-foot-wide ribbon can hold up to 700 skaters at Maggie Daley Park, city officials said.

For the most part, the players skated at the same relaxing pace others did around the ribbon. Their competitive spirit only came out when two young boys and their dad recognized them as Wolves players and the players playfully challenged the boys to a one-lap race. (The players won.) They chatted and took selfies with other skaters making the

rounds. Welsh even showed off his few years of figure skating experience.

“It’s a completely different environment. It’s a little bit—I can’t say cooler. It’s definitely unique with the skyline around, the lake here and lights are out,” said Welsh.

Not only can skaters admire the iconic skyline, they can look at the climbing walls under construction in the middle of the ribbon, face west and see the BP Bridge that connects Mary Daley Park to Millennium Park and its Pritzker Pavilion and Great Lawn, and catch a glimpse of a slide from the play garden at the southeast corner.

“It’s a cool concept, a good time, fun and enjoyable,” said Climie, 31, who has played for the Dallas Stars and Phoenix Coyotes. “It’s definitely a cool atmosphere.”

Skating outdoors among evergreen trees is reminiscent of being on the frozen lakes in Leduc, Canada, where Climie learned to skate at age 5.

“I think the ice is better here, really good ice,” he said.

Welsh was two years old when he first skated at a rink in Canada. Fast forward a dozen years to when he built a backyard rink.

“It’s nicer to show up and have the ice freshly Zambonied and fresh. Mine was more work than it was fun, I think,” he said. “It’s pretty awesome and the guys are obviously doing a good job here.” [@LIVIVANCO](mailto:LIVIVANCO@TRIBUNE.COM)

WATCH THE WOLVES
skate at
Maggie Daley Park!
redeyechicago.com/wolvesskate

BREAKING THE ICE

RedEye wanted to see what the pros thought of the new ice skating ribbon at Maggie Daley Park. Chicago Wolves hockey players Jeremy Welsh and Matt Climie gave us their first impressions after six laps on the ice. L.V.

What three words best describe your experience on the ribbon?

Jeremy Welsh: Fast, fast and faster. Oh, and romantic I’d say.

Matt Climie: I’d go with enjoyable, fun and, yeah, exciting.

Finish this sentence. The coolest thing about ice skating here is ...

JW: ... the atmosphere, the ambience.

MC: ... the atmosphere.

Would driving the Zamboni be really fun or really hard?

JW: I think it would be fun. It’s like driving on a winding road rather than a highway. He gets to test his skills out on the corners.

MC: I’m going to go with challenging, definitely the first few times. But I think once he got it down, it’d be pretty easy.

How many laps could you do, realistically, before getting tired?

JW: Tired and stopping? I’d

say 400.

MC: I’m not going with 400. I’m going with maybe 200.

What’s good ice skating music?

JW: I’d put on Michael Buble’s Christmas CD. He’s a Canadian.

MC: I wouldn’t go with that. Maybe country music. A little softer.

Best ice skating movie: “The Cutting Edge” or “Blades of Glory”?

JW: The scene from “Happy Gilmore” is the best ice skating scene. “Blades of Glory,” I guess.

MC: “Blades of Glory,” for sure.

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chicago



TUESDAY
46°35
Rain, rain



WEDNESDAY
36°27
Let it snow



THURSDAY
38°28
Gray Christmas



As of Monday morning, the CTA Blue Line Damen stop is open after two months of renovation.

NANCY STONE/TRIBUNE



December could be cloudiest on books in Chicago

By Megan Crepeau | REDEYE

Baby, it's gray outside.

This month is on track to be one of the cloudiest Decembers on record in Chicago, according to National Weather Service data. Monday was the 15th day this month without a scrap of sunshine, according to WGN-TV meteorologist Tom Skilling, and during daylight hours this month, Chicagoans have seen sunshine just 16 percent of the time.

Even for Chicago, which usually sees 41 percent sunshine in December, that's an extremely gray month.

"This is by its nature the cloudiest month, but this is a whole new level," Skilling said. "It puts a cloudy December in a whole new arena."

The National Weather Service in Chicago took to Twitter on Saturday, noting "only 33 mins of sun since Dec. 12." So far this month, there have been only 1,992 minutes of sunshine in Chicago (about 33 hours), according to retired meteorologist Frank Wachowski, who

measures sunshine for the weather service.

And it most likely will stay cloudy, according to Bill Nelson, observation program leader at the weather service's Chicago-area office in Romeoville.

"Looks like there's a possibility of some sunshine Christmas Day," he said. "But if there is, it won't last long, because it looks like we've got another chance of rain or snow come Friday. But that's no guarantee either [of sunshine] on Thursday."

The least sunny December on record in Chicago was in 1975, when the area saw 19 percent of possible sunshine. In November 1985, the cloudiest recorded month, Chicago had just 16 percent sunshine.

"If this were to continue like this through a week from Thursday, then we could even be in line to become the cloudiest month ever," said Skilling, who pointed out the month is not over yet.

Still, the recent gray could test the patience of even the hardiest winter-lover, Nelson said.

"I think everybody, when the sun is out, feels a little chipper and more energetic, that goes for everybody," Nelson said. "And when it's a long term [cloudy stretch], that's where it starts wearing on people."

The National Weather Service cautions that cloudy weather can trigger Seasonal Affective Disorder, a winter depression that can be serious. According to the National Institutes of Health, SAD can be a product of low light during the winter months, and light therapy can help.

Usually, winter is a trade-off between cold temperatures and clear skies, Nelson said. Despite the clouds, this December has been relatively warm for Chicago.

"Like they say, if you want sunshine, you've gotta put up with the cold in the winter," Nelson said. "If you want sunshine it's usually on a cold, cold day; as high pressure moves in, it's able to chase the clouds away [and] it brings cold temperatures, too."

MCREPEAU@TRIBUNE.COM | @CREPEAU

129

The number of years the National Weather Service has been collecting weather data

45

The percentage of Chicago Christmases from 1885 to 2013 that had no snow, according to the National Weather Service, which is calling for snow on Christmas Eve this year

1 INCH

The amount of snow needed on the ground on Dec. 25 in order to be considered a "white Christmas" in the U.S., according to the National Climatic Data Center

5.1

The number of inches of snow that fell on Dec. 25, 1950, which was the highest recorded snowfall in Chicago since 1885



sports

THE PAU FACTOR

WHO'S WINNING THE GASOL-BOOZER 'SWAP'?

RedEye

The Bulls' past and present collide supernova-style when the L.A. Lakers visit the United Center on Thursday. OK, so that's being overdramatic. Still, it's the first time the teams will meet since the Bulls amnestied Carlos Boozer and signed former Lakers forward Pau Gasol in the offseason. The prevailing sentiment during Boozer's run in Chicago is the team couldn't dump him fast enough. And that the 34-year-old Gasol is a huge upgrade for the Bulls despite being a year older than Boozer. It's no contest if you look at the records. The Bulls are among the Eastern Conference elite while the Lakers are one of the worst teams in the NBA. But how do their stats stack up? That's what we're here to find out. GETTY IMAGES PHOTOS; STATS FROM ESPN.COM

MONDAY'S GAME
Chicago 129,
Toronto 120

PAU GASOL

268 REBOUNDS

52 ASSISTS

46 BLOCKS

BY THE NUMBERS

No matter what you're counting—field goals, free throws, rebounds, assists, blocks—Pau Gasol tops Carlos Boozer's current season totals. *STATS THROUGH SUNDAY

GASOL

Shot made

Shot missed

BOOZER

Shot made

Shot missed

FIELD GOALS

169

186

→ **47.6%**

146

143

→ **50.5%**

FREE THROWS

80

23

→ **77.7%**

40 **23** → **63.5%**



**CARLOS
BOOZER**

**190
REBOUNDS**

**37
ASSISTS**

**3
BLOCKS**

Bulls better off without Boozer



**Lela
Olds**

» [redeye@tribune.com](#)
» [@literallylela](#)

July 15, 2014, was a good day in Bulls history. It was the day a good 90 percent of loyal fans (give or take) hoped and prayed for. On that day, the Bulls finally amnestyed Carlos Boozer.

In summer 2010, many Bulls fans held their breath and waited to find out if the team would acquire LeBron James,

Dwyane Wade or even Chris Bosh. Instead, they got Boozer. Well, after four seasons of hearing "Gimme that [bleep]!" after uncontested rebounds and absolutely ridiculous fouls, the Bulls were finally able to get rid of him. Hallelujah!

Don't get me wrong, Boozer was a good offensive player. The Bulls were better thanks to his points. He pulled down plenty of rebounds (even if no one was around). And he seemed like a supportive, fun teammate.

However, when you play in Chicago, especially under a coach like Tom Thibodeau, you are expected to play superb defense. And the Bulls did not get that from Boozer, which resulted in him warming the bench during the fourth quarter while

Taj Gibson took his place. As a veteran All-Star with a hefty contract, that's unacceptable.

Now the Lakers are dealing with what was once the Bulls' burden. Apparently his lack of defense didn't go over well with Lakers coach Byron Scott, who demoted Boozer earlier this month. No surprise there.

Fortunately for the Lakers and Boozer, he has improved since being demoted. Sometimes you need that wake-up call to whip you into shape. Thank goodness that's not the Bulls' problem anymore. Yes, Bulls personnel was less than smart for offering Boozer such a gracious contract in 2010, but the team has corrected its mistake by acquiring Pau Gasol.

Although I feel a little bad for Boozer, I am happy with the current Bulls team. Hopefully Kobe Bryant and Scott can mold Boozer into a better player than he was in Chicago. It'll be interesting to see the dynamic when the teams face off on Christmas Day.

LELA OLDS IS A REDEYE SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR.

Concussion ends season for Clausen

Cutler to start finale Sunday against Vikings

Chicago Tribune

Jay Cutler is once again the starting quarterback for the Bears. Just like that.

In yet another surprise twist in a season full of unpredictability, the Bears announced Monday afternoon that Cutler would start their regular-season finale Sunday against the Vikings in Minneapolis. The move came in concert with the team's announcement that Jimmy Clausen has been ruled out for the finale after being diagnosed with a concussion.

Clausen took a vicious helmet-to-helmet shot from Lions defensive end Ziggy Ansah on the Bears' final drive of Sunday's 20-14 loss at Soldier Field. And while Clausen remained on the field for four more plays, the Bears said in a news release Monday that the 27-year-old experienced delayed symptoms as a result of the collision.

After visiting a hospital Sunday evening to be examined by a team physician, Clausen was diagnosed with a concussion. The Bears said Clausen will continue to be evaluated under the NFL's concussion protocol. Still, the team chose not to delay a decision on Clausen's playing status,



Jimmy Clausen
JOSE M. OSORIO/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

"That's the doctors' decision," Bears head coach Marc Trestman said. "Medically speaking, he's been ruled out. And that was done today."

So now Trestman puts the controls of his offense back in the hands of Cutler, the struggling quarterback whom he benched just last Wednesday. Trestman said he wasn't worried about any strain in his relationship with Cutler based on last week's developments.

"I believe that Jay can work his way out of this," Trestman said. "I've enjoyed coaching him and working with him. And we had dialogue last week. And we worked together last week. It was a tough week on him. I empathize with him on that. But we're moving forward, both with the idea that we've worked together for a long time and that hasn't changed."

"To be honest with you, I feel really bad for Jay. When you're having a tough season like this, he's not the guy to be the scapegoat or the guy to blame. There's a lot of guys you could put that blame on."

—Bears kicker Robbie Gould, defending quarterback Jay Cutler during Monday's "The Speigel and Mannelly Show" on WSCR-AM 670



Raiola suspended for stomp

The NFL has suspended Detroit center Dominic Raiola (right) for one game for stomping on the right ankle of Bears defensive tackle Ego Ferguson early in the third quarter of the Lions' 20-14 victory Sunday at Soldier Field. Raiola will miss the winner-take-all NFC North battle with Green Bay on Sunday at Lambeau Field. Game officials did not see the play and afterward Raiola claimed it was not intentional.

GETTY IMAGES

"This guy is a dirty player, and he's a worse human being."

—Bears receiver Brandon Marshall, speaking during his show on WMVP-AM 1000 about Raiola. Marshall also said the one-game suspension was not enough and that Raiola "should be banned from the NFL."

fiveonfive**HOME STRETCH**

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comic

1 Which Blackhawk should be next to get the All-Star Game video treatment?	"Baywatch" lifeguard montage featuring Raanta. Dude is on point with the saves.	Kane. It would be more of a PSA.	Never mind video treatment—bring back "The Stripper" during Shoot the Puck. #daggers	Tommy Hawk.	Patrick Kane, with original music from the movie "Black Hawk Down" as the score.
2 Who should be the Bears' starting quarterback for their final game next Sunday?	Staley the Bear. Can't get any worse, right?	Brett Favre. Make it happen.	Guaranteed some clown in a brown bag gets more cheers than anyone in pads.	Jim McMahon.	Jay Cutler, only if you promise it's their final game ... ever.
3 What's worse than getting struck by lightning after a football game?	Paying \$400 to attend a Bears game.	Jay Cutler.	How about natural grass at Soldier Field? The cranberry marsh strikes again.	Being the highest paid QB in the NFL and getting benched.	The lightning not texting you back the next day.
4 Imagine what Derrick Rose's advice to injured rookie Jabari Parker will be.	"Milk it, bro."	"Always swipe right."	"Want my Skittles machine, bro?"	"You've got two years to heal ... don't worry."	It's a lot of encouragement like, "I mean, technically you played in the NBA."
5 Getting \$6 million a year after you retire is like not a clue. But I'd be happy to try it out (looking at YOU, McCaskeys).	... being able to retire someday.	... Deion (49ers) two-stepping in ATL after going INT to paydirt. #fismyhouse	... getting \$100 million to ride the bench.	A real tough day for the 1 percent.

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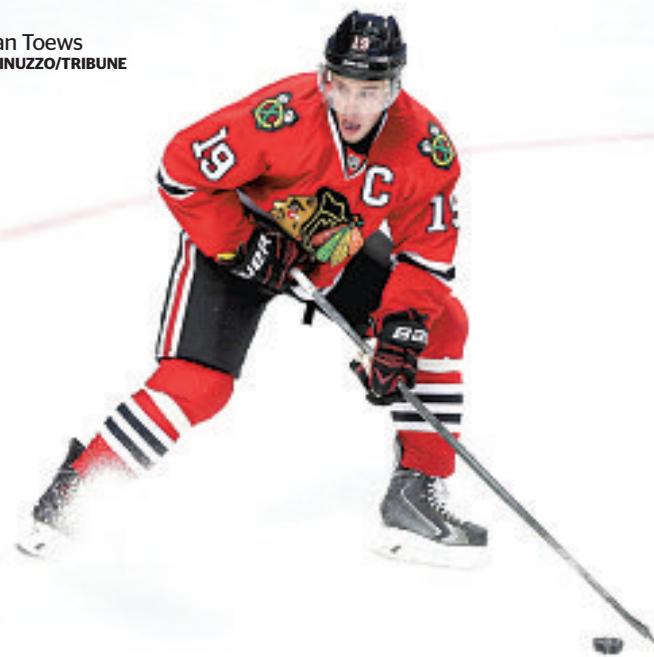
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CATCH UP ON THE **HAWKS**



**Evan F.
Moore**

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With the exception of a few blips—like falling just short of another Stanley Cup—the Blackhawks have rocked 2014. And their next three games are against division rivals, so they have a great chance to stiff-arm the rest of the pack.

There are a lot of games in an NHL season, however, so it's understandable if some of the storylines have evaded you. The next 500 words or so will have you all caught up.

- » Patrick Kane continues to amaze. Spectacular goal here, jaw-dropping pass there.
- » Free-agent acquisition Brad Richards started slowly but has come on. He stabilized the second-line center spot, a position at which the team had a gaping hole.
- » In part because of Patrick Sharp's injury,

Marcus Kruger, Brandon Saad and Ben Smith have stepped up.

- » Even though Andrew Shaw is beloved by fans for his physical play and being highly skilled in agitation, he was not that productive while playing with Kane. The penalties along with giving up the puck at inopportune times hurt those on his line. Coach Joel Quenneville saw as much and put Shaw on another line; he appears to be flourishing as a result.
- » What can you say about Jonathan Toews? He's Mr. Consistent and continues to be among the NHL leaders in faceoff percentage.
- » Kris Versteeg appears to have gotten out of Quenneville's doghouse. He is among the league leaders in plus-minus.
- » Ironman Duncan Keith, Brent Seabrook, Niklas Hjalmarsson and Johnny Oduya continue to be solid defensemen.
- » Corey Crawford, the whipping boy for fans who still believe he's the weak link, is on pace for his best regular season yet. His recent misstep at a concert put him on the shelf temporarily. Not that the Hawks

have missed a beat with Antti Raanta and Scott Darling backing him up.

- » Bryan Bickell continues to struggle after receiving a salary bump due to his play during the 2013 Stanley Cup run.
- » The rumblings that forward Jeremy Morin wanted out because of a lack of playing time appeared to be true as he was traded to Columbus for defenseman Tim Erixon. The deal helps solidify the Hawks' back end, especially with rookie Trevor van Riemsdyk on injured reserve with a lower-body injury.
- » Even though the Blackhawks seem to have coasted at times, they have a propensity to turn it on. For instance, in their first rematch this season with defending Cup champion L.A., the Kings had no answer for the Hawks' offensive onslaught. During the third period especially, the Kings could not get the puck out of their zone.

There you have it. Now you can dive into holiday festivities knowing the Hawks look like Stanley Cup contenders again.

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movies



Meryl Streep in 'Into the Woods'

This musical tumbles right off the stage



FAST PAISED

Matt Pais

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My sister loves musicals, and "Into the Woods" is her all-time favorite. So after seeing the big-screen version of the Stephen Sondheim production, I had to call and ask her why.

"I've always loved fairy tales, and I love the way they intertwine the different stories," she said. "And I love the music."

I've never seen the Broadway show, but instinct tells me those who love "Into the Woods" on stage may find this movie even lousier than people experiencing it for the first time. Sheesh, where to begin:

When people are talking, it seems like director Rob Marshall ("Chicago," "Nine") doesn't know how they should sound. When they're singing, he doesn't know how the movie should look. The story mashes up a variety of popular fairy tales (Cinderella, Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk, Rapunzel), but, as executed here in a very PG-rated, Disney-fied way, finds no purpose in the threads that are chosen and intertwined. (We already had the mediocre, live-action "Jack the Giant Slayer" and "Red Riding Hood," and the effects in "Woods," which feels almost as random as the abysmal "Rise of the Guardians," are no better.) On stage

!! **!!** **!!** **!!** **!!**
Into the Woods
PG

I'm told the person playing the wolf wears a full wolf costume. Here it's Johnny Depp in a gray suit with furry hands. He looks like Jack White with a fake mustache doing a Johnny Depp impression.

Meryl Streep, a conventional choice to play the witch, doesn't know where to put the emphasis of her menace and becomes as wishy-washy as Angelina Jolie in the awful, live-action "Maleficent." Anna Kendrick (who appears next year in a brilliant musical, "The Last Five Years") is appealing as Cinderella, but the movie loses track of why this peasant-turned-princess runs out of a royal ball night after night. And why does the Prince (Chris Pine) need to fit her to her lost slipper? He already knows what she looks like.

The unifying storyline involves a baker (James Corden) and his wife (Emily Blunt) who must arbitrarily round up objects so the witch will lift a curse and the couple can have a baby. Too bad this requires treading through subplots we've known since childhood with only minimal wit (says the Prince, "I was raised to be charming, not sincere"). The tone is light when it should be dark, and muddled when it tries to be edgy, with songs that rarely rise above forgettable. "This is not a show for little kids," my sister tells me. Sadly, the movie isn't for anyone.

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movies



Jack O'Connell (right) in 'Unbroken'

Hero's journey never able to plant its feet

FAST PAISED

Matt Pais

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I'm never in favor of titles with subtitles (like "Exodus: Gods and Kings"), but I'm especially glad that "Unbroken" isn't called "Unbroken: The Louis Zamperini Story." Because, disappointingly, this isn't the Louis Zamperini story. It's a war film without the necessary entry points and narrative engines, leading to a shockingly out of balance story from writers (the freakin' Coen brothers) whose plots normally have a masterful touch.

"Unbroken" comes from real life, of course, adapted by the Coens, co-writers Richard LaGravenese and William Nicholson and director Angelina Jolie from Laura Hillenbrand's book "Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience and Redemption." It certainly would seem to have a great hook for a movie: Olympic athlete—once the fastest high school runner in American history—faces even bigger challenges while stranded in the ocean and imprisoned by the Japanese during WWII.

Except we learn so little about Louie (Jack O'Connell, very good here and in the recent "Starred Up") that the film, focusing mostly on his 45 days floating in a raft and daily agony as a POW, has no internal life, no subplot, to enhance our experience.

Unbroken
PG-13

There is a young man we only briefly see as a trouble-making kid whose life literally gets on track once he begins running competitively, before suddenly, he's high in the sky fighting for his country.

The film absolutely captures the misery of life in a detention camp. I exclaimed out loud when Louie and his fellow soldiers at sea (Domhnall Gleeson, Finn Wittrock) yank a shark from the water and kill it for food. On some level it's nice that Jolie and the writers avoid the hackneyed scenes of families in denial about impending military service and big speeches about how "It's something I have to do." But "Unbroken" has no sense of Louie's life outside two things his brother (Alex Russell) said to him and everything that happened after his plane crashed. How did he enlist in the first place? What did he think about during his time away? How did he make it through? Basic storytelling and detail here, people.

Movies like "Unbroken" don't work if you lose sight of what makes them unique. Instead it's just any old POW tale, less resonant than "Rescue Dawn" and inspiring only on the surface—because that's all there is.

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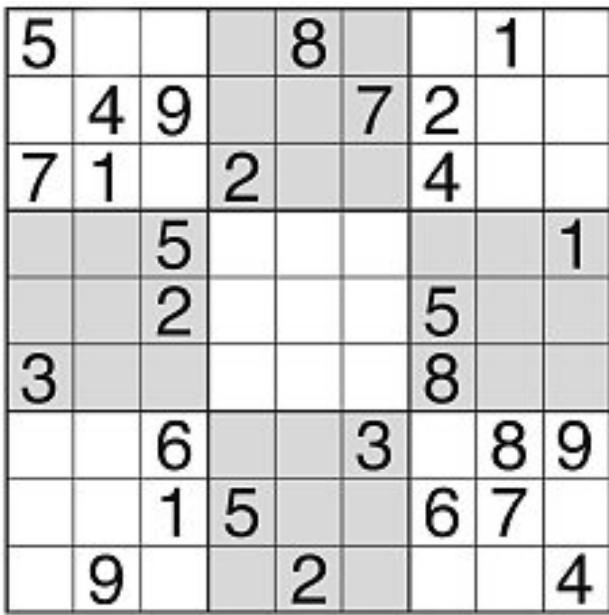


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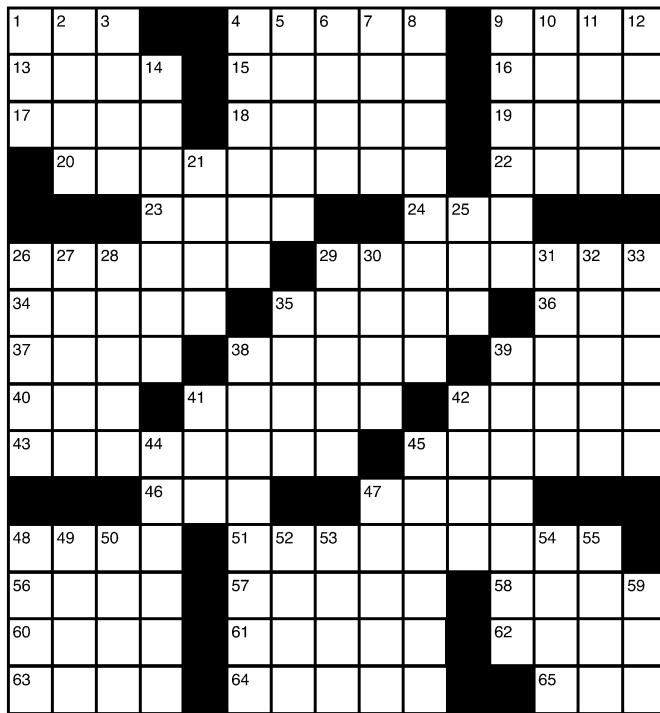
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**MONDAY'S SOLUTIONS****ACROSS**

- 1 Irrigate
- 4 Receded
- 9 ___ down; resign
- 13 ___ as a pin
- 15 Operated a car
- 16 Long sandwich
- 17 Windy day toy
- 18 Carvey and Delany
- 19 Grey tea
- 20 Poverty
- 22 Additionally
- 23 Three-__sloth
- 24 Dine
- 26 Fulton & Martin
- 29 Adores
- 34 San Diego baseball player
- 35 Wild angry speeches
- 36 Morning grass blade moisture
- 37 Big-__ semis
- 38 Relocates
- 39 Usually dry streambed
- 40 Letters before an alias
- 41 Argon & helium
- 42 Composer George M. __
- 43 Small fruit pie
- 45 Lombard or King
- 46 Make fun of
- 47 B of A or Chase
- 48 Early video game
- 51 Large city in So. California
- 56 Very excited
- 57 Furious
- 58 Dweeb
- 60 __-blue; loyal
- 61 Expenses
- 62 Music's Lady __
- 63 Transmit
- 64 Leg joints
- 65 Actor Knotts

DOWN

1 Pen contents	32 Ride a bike	48 Touches lightly
2 Harness strap	33 Pigs and hogs	49 Meanie
3 "Kiss Me, __"	35 Got up	50 Person, place or thing
4 Albert & Cäntor	26 Fat shunner of nursery rhyme	52 Common metal
5 Cattle marking	27 Japanese poem of 3 lines	53 Bouquet holder
6 Femur or tibia	28 Allan Poe	54 Deceased
7 Gabor and Longoria	29 Vacillate	55 Consequently
8 Baked Alaska & apple cobbler	30 On __ own; independent	59 VP Quayle
9 Knife blade case	31 Neighbor of Montana	
10 Greenish-blue		
11 Goofs		
12 Explorer Marco		

**TODAY IN THE YEAR ...**

1788: Maryland voted to cede a 100-square-mile area for the seat of the national government; about two-thirds of the area became the District of Columbia.

1997: A jury in Denver convicted Terry Nichols of involuntary manslaughter and conspiracy for his role in the Oklahoma City bombing, declining to find him guilty of murder.

2003: The government announced the first suspected (later confirmed) case of mad cow disease in United States.

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2007 Pontiac G6 #00CP2802.....	\$7,697
2007 Honda Accord #E2402A	\$7,897
2006 Chrysler PT Cruiser GT #00CP2801.....	\$7,997
2006 Ford E-150 #00CP2818	\$7,998
2008 Ford Fusion SE #00E2475A	\$8,868
2008 Chevrolet Impala LT #00F1099N	\$9,297
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2007 Scion tC #00CP2820.....	\$9,584
2006 Cadillac STS V6 #0XE2420A.....	\$9,825
2005 Dodge Dakota SLT Quad Cab #00CP2825	\$9,952
2008 Nissan Maxima SEL #XXE2421A	\$10,498
2007 Jeep Patriot Limited #00CP2826	\$10,598

whoville

Iggy pudding

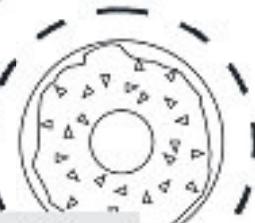
Here's how the 'Fancy' singer decked her halls



By Dana Moran | REDEYE

Who knew Iggy Azalea was such a big Christmas fan? The Aussie hip-popper told The Hollywood Reporter that she and boyfriend Nick Young have had their Christmas tree up since the week before Thanksgiving, and the two will be spending the holiday with his family in their new home. "To say I'm excited would be an understatement," she said.

Naturally, this got us wondering—what does Iggy hang on her Christmas tree? This year, we'll let you decide! Cut out and color these wacky ornaments, and place them however you'd like. Egg nog may be a wise addition. DAMORAN@TRIBUNE.COM | [@REDEYE_DANA](#)



Pink glazed
doughnut ornament
The kind with the little
sprinkles!

Figgy pudding
ornament
Because natch.

12 years of collectible Hallmark
Snoopy ornaments
Minus two years that her crazy
ex-boyfriend "accidentally" took
when he moved out.

Kangaroo lights
But not boxing kangaroos, because THAT
would be tacky.



Fimo clay figurines of
every outfit Cher wore in
"Clueless"
Watch some damn videos if
you don't get this one.

Nerf basketballs

Problem: Her Lakers-player honey will snatch them all and start slam-dunking all over the place. That's why you keep the Nerf bow and arrow handy, we suppose.

A live kiwi bird
as a tree topper
It guards against present thieves and honors
New Zealand, Australia's tiny neighbor!

Swedish Fish garlands
They just contrast better
with the tree than popcorn, don't you think?

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red hot



Kevin Hart
MCT FILE

HOT DATE JAN. 17

That's when Kevin Hart will host the first "SNL" episode of 2015, **vulture.com** reports. It's Hart's second time hosting the show in less than a year; he made his debut in March. Clearly NBC knows where the funny money is.

A gaggle of grooms

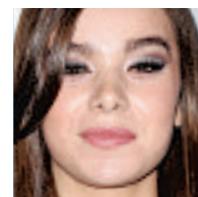
Two musical men married their true loves over the weekend. Lance Bass and Michael Turchin, who've been together since 2011, tied the knot Saturday in L.A., **eonline.com** reports. Bass' former N'Sync bandmate, JC Chasez, sang during the couple's first dance. And Sunday, Elton John celebrated his second ceremony with longtime partner David Furnish—the ninth anniversary of their civil partnership. Congrats all around!



Michael Turchin (left)
and Lance Bass GETTY IMAGES FILE

Man vs. robot

Apparently Mark Wahlberg knows something Michael Bay doesn't. Wait, that statement is probably far too broad. Anyway, Wahlberg told MTV that he's on board for a fifth "Transformers" flick. "Yeah, I committed to doing a couple more. You know I can't speak for Mr. Bay, but something tells me we'll be on the set soon," he said. Is that something the sweet, sweet sound of dollar bills slapping together? We think, yes.



Steinfeld

Hottest party in town

Forget the "True Grit" braids—Hailee Steinfeld is officially an adult. The star celebrated her 18th birthday Friday night

with friends like Sarah Hyland, Odeya Rush, Austin Mahone and members of Fifth Harmony, **eonline.com** reports. Apparently much dancing was done. "WELL THAT WAS FUN and I've also never had balloons spell out my name before," Steinfeld later tweeted. It's amazing the things they can do with balloons these days.



GETTY IMAGES

THE QUOTE
I've totally matured past that. I tried it. Realized it's not an efficient use of my time."

—The Gambler" star **Brie Larson**, to Vulture, on whether she still eats cereal in the shower, as she once told Conan O'Brien. We have not yet made it to that point in our lives.

Finding her voice

It's not the first time she's spoken out about her childhood stutter, but "Into The Woods" star Emily Blunt told NPR this week that she might have her childhood impediment to thank for her entire career. Blunt says a teacher suggested that she try out for a school play, and that it might be easier to speak if she were pretending to be someone else. "I think I get a little bit overwhelmed if I think about the odds of this not working out," she said. "I'm someone who never thought I would end up in a career where I had to speak fluently. And here I am."

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